

TAN FEEDBACK ON Tickets Selling out, Presales to Boards, customer preference etc

FROM THORNHILL LIFELONG LEARNING TO TAN MEMBERS

On Jun 28, 2018, at 12:00 PM, <cavrich@rogers.com> <cavrich@rogers.com> wrote:

Hi Everyone,

I am hoping you can help us with some feedback or advice on selling tickets. I am from Thornhill Lifelong Learning, a relatively new organization that started our first lectures in Spring 2017.

We recently put our Fall 2018 season on sale (6 lectures). We have capacity for 300 seats. We blocked a few for the Board/volunteers and put up 275 tickets which **sold out in under 5 minutes**. Needless to say, we have many unhappy (and angry) people who could not get tickets.

Our Process: We announce the date and time of the sale a week ahead to all people who subscribe to our email list and anyone who attended previous series – now over 700 people. We do not give preference to returning members and we do not sell memberships. The majority buy 1-2 tickets (not blocks). We do not have the ability to limit tickets sales to e.g. 1 to 2 tickets.

My questions are:

1. **do you give preference to previous clients?** (if so, how would anyone new ever have access?)
2. **do you do an “pre-sales” before your tickets go public** e.g. to board members for family/friends?
3. **How quickly do you sell out?** (I’d like to make reference to similar programs in an email we’ll be sending to our subscriber list – not with specific names of course)
4. **do you also have unhappy/angry customers** (or is this just us)?
5. **do you have any advice for us?** (we are planning to see if we can add another series or mini series in the spring if we can manage the logistics and peoplepower).

Thank you so much for your help. We really appreciate it.

Cheryl Avrich
Thornhill Lifelong Learning <http://thornhilllifelonglearning.com/>
<image002.jpg>

RESPONSES AS OF JULY 2ND. EMAIL SENT JUNE 29.

Hi Cheryl,

We are **Third Age Learning Burlington**. Yes, we experience the same problems.
To answer your questions:

1. No preference given to previous clients

2 Preference given to Board Members and Program Committee Members (1 week bf advertised to the rest of the individuals on our email list)

3 Sell out happens within a few hours of opening registration

4 YES, some very unhappy people

5 We offer "on the day walk in spaces" PROVIDED we have seats available. A count is taken shortly before the session begins and then we sell the number of seats that we have available.

Numbers are provided to those who do not have a series pass and they wait outside the presentation room until we determine the number of vacant seats available. We charge a little extra for the 'walk in' than they would pay for the series.

TAN should consider making your results available to the TAN membership. It would be interesting.

Barb Pickworth

At **Learning Unlimited Etobicoke**, we provide on-line registration for our lecture series (3 series of 8 lectures in the fall and 3 series of 10 lectures in the winter) and consider those who have attended previous series to be members.

1. Yes, previous registrants have an opportunity for early registration on a specified date.
2. Newcomers and those wishing to register for an additional series do so on a specified date the following week.
3. Most series sell out. The most popular sell out within minutes on the first day of early registration.
4. If a series is sold out, members and newcomers can place their names on a waiting list. Newcomers will be registered for a course before existing members register for a 2nd course. Some people who are not able to get into their first choice of lecture decide to register for another series in order to become members and have the opportunity for early registration in the next term.
5. We have found that we do not get 100% attendance even at sold out series due to people being ill, having medical appointments, taking vacation, etc. Therefore, we oversell by a small margin with the understanding that any Board Members present (who attend free of charge) will surrender their seats to paying members if attendance surpasses seating capacity. We believe that has happened just once or twice in our 40 year history. Our venue has a seating capacity of 180.

Glenn Yaffee

TAN Representative and Vice-President of the Board
Learning Unlimited Etobicoke

Hi Cheryl,

You are having exactly the same experience as us in **Markham**.

One variation...we give 24 hours notice that the tickets are going on sale to the people who **Bought** tickets to the previous lecture series. We sell out just as quickly and have a few hundred unsatisfied

people. This time we actually had 27 seats that were still available so we emailed our mailing list, (over 600)

And sold out in 27 minutes and had a lot of unhappy people!

We do oversell seats as we assume there will be a 10% no show, but this really doesn't help the situation.

We are tussling with this problem but don't have an answer. Whatever you do, you will always have a limited
Number of seats to sell.

I'll be interested to see what other TAN members are doing.

Good luck,

Les Gagnon

Hi Cheryl,

I hope you are well and enjoying our warm weather now that it has arrived.

I'm really sorry I can't help you with your questions because the **Academy for Lifelong Learning** does not encounter this problem. Our members pay an annual fee that entitles them to take up to four academic year-long courses, attend bi-weekly lectures, our spring lecture series and lots of social events. Our membership is still open for those who wish to register and, for our lecture series, we are able to accommodate all that come (Innis College's Town Hall holds about 250 people).

My only suggestion for you would be the possibility of having the same speakers on two different days, or have a morning session followed by an afternoon one with that speaker. Then you would be able to accommodate twice the number you now have and avoid negative feedback.

Be well and I look forward to seeing you at another TAN event.

Sharon

Sharon Harris
sharonlh546@gmail.com

FROM GTLII (Collingwood) – two emails in thread...

Thanks Cheryl

On the ticket purchase for family and friends, we do not allow that, unless they are members already. I forgot to mention that anyone can only buy 2 tickets max and members can only buy for another member during the advance purchase window. That rule we just put in place this year. The system checks the member database when a 2nd ticket is being purchased and will not allow a non-member purchase.

Happy to chat sometime if helpful or meet up for a coffee or drink in your neck of the woods.
David

David Green

----- Original message -----

From: cavrich@rogers.com
Date: 2018-06-30 10:20 PM (GMT-05:00)
To: david_hugh@rogers.com
Subject: RE: Question for TAN members on Selling Tickets

Thank you David! So interesting. And helpful. And very funny – the part about your demographic and how they respond/complain. I'm not sure which is worse – our young boomers or your older whiners. Both demanding!

Can I ask if you allow your Board members and committee members to buy tickets for family and friends, and if so, is there a limit?

Your philosophy of "it's your institute" is interesting. We do ask for lots of input (surveys on topics of interest and post lecture feedback), but we don't say it's 'theirs' per se.

Anyway, thanks so much for taking the time to write such a detailed response. For newbies like us, it's really helpful.

Regards, Cheryl

From: david_hugh@rogers.com <david_hugh@rogers.com>
Sent: June 30, 2018 4:42 PM
To: cavrich@rogers.com
Subject: RE: Question for TAN members on Selling Tickets

Hello Cheryl

See my specific replies below. Some background and you can check our website for lecture details in 2018/19 and past e-brochures. www.gtlli.ca

- We run 4 lecture series from Sept to May
 - 4 individual lectures in Sept/Oct called Perspectives
 - 3 x 6 lecture series in Fall/Winter/Spring with a theme for each series.
- Anyone must buy at least 1 lecture series to be a member
- There is a \$2 part of the lecture fee that is membership. Lectures are \$42/series of 6
- Those could be one lecturer for 6 weeks or multiple lecturers on different aspects of the topic each week.
- Our capacity at the venue is 400 but we sell 430 tickets this year since not all show up
- We have about 640 members across those 4 lecture series. Not all buy all 4.
- we average about 80-90% turnout so have seats available
- we started "walk-in" seats last year to fill the empty seats at \$10/ticket. No guarantees but everyone gets in so far. Quite successful and growing. May do advance walk-in ticket purchase 1 week before each lecture for a few seats.
- We have a mail list and past member list of about 800 people.
- We have 95% of people on email (about 40 snail mailers), but an average open rate of about 70% as per Mailchimp.

- We might have an older demographic cohort than you ate 80-90 yrs. They expect a lot and do not want change at all -- so same time, same parking spot, same seat, coffee at 10:45 and get me out by 12 noon. Challenging sometimes. But that is changing and some younger, new members (60-70) want to try some new things so a delicate balance.

Hope this helps

David

Subject: Question for TAN members on Selling Tickets

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My questions are:

1. **do you give preference to previous clients?** (if so, how would anyone new ever have access?)

[DG] Anyone who is a member from previous year has priority access for registration one week before anyone else. Hard to get in as a new member, but we do have turnover of about 60-70 people so there are some new members.

2. **do you do an “pre-sales” before your tickets go public** e.g. to board members for family/friends?

[DG] We have a week prior to Member registration for what we call Core Members- board, volunteers on all committees and our Founders – original founding members from 1995 which was 37 and is now about 18.

3. **How quickly do you sell out?** (I'd like to make reference to similar programs in an email we'll be sending to our subscriber list – not with specific names of course)

[DG] This year we are selling 430 seats at each lecture series. We usually sell out within hours on the first day of Member registration, although not this year. WE will have about 5-15% of the tickets available for new members starting Jul 2.

4. do you also have unhappy/angry customers (or is this just us)?

[DG] There will always be unhappy people about something- the website – too complex, hard to navigate, too slow; the course selection, parking, coffee, why some get advance purchase rights, not tech savvy so cannot do it online, too tech savvy and think I can do it better etc. etc. Forgot username/password but cannot follow rules about reset password. Not sure about email and did not get the notice (check Spam etc.).

5. do you have any advice for us? (we are planning to see if we can add another series or mini series in the spring if we can manage the logistics and peoplepower).

[DG] Stay the course and push through what works, but keep an open mind and listen to the members and acknowledge their input. You may not always use it or make changes but we always say it is “your institute” to the members so contribute. If you don’t like the decisions get involved as a volunteer – that quiets a number of them down, and some join and do contribute.

David

David Green

Chair

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